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Short-duration country programme document

Lebanon

Summary

The short-duration country programme document for Lebanon is presented to the Executive Board for discussion and approval. The Board is requested to approve the aggregate indicative budget of $616,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and $1,200,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the year 2007.

* E/ICEF/2006/10.

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The situation of children and women

1. Lebanon does not yet have a comprehensive national development framework. Development assistance has been seriously undermined by incomplete statistical data. The extremely low quality of statistics has been noted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the mid-term review of the current country programme for 2002-2006 found that the absence of reliable statistics made an accurate assessment of programme achievements practically impossible.

2. The well-being of children and women in Lebanon depends on the availability, affordability and quality of fragmented social services, with the bulk of health, education and social protection needs satisfied by private or non-governmental service providers. The capacity of government ministries to maintain standards or monitor service delivery is very limited, while the quality of public services remains poor and their role is often marginal.

3. Indicators for child and maternal survival and development are improving and do not reflect serious regional disparities. HIV/AIDS is an increasing threat. Recent surveys reveal major gaps between knowledge and practices, and there is a lack of sustainable, affordable and culturally acceptable counselling services. A survey by the Pan Arab Project for Family Health has also suggested that about 9 per cent of children aged 10 years and above are not in school.

4. The growing number of out-of-school children presents particular challenges to the Lebanese Government, with almost 40 per cent of adolescents aged 15-18 years not continuing their schooling. The issue of child labour has been recognized as a growing problem. Adolescents and young people face challenges linked to lifestyles, educational quality and relevance, and their role and participation in public life. The unemployment rate among Lebanese youth (16 per cent) is double the national average and up to 80 per cent of university graduates do not associate their further life plans with Lebanon, which leads to a drastic depletion of national human resources.

5. To date no cases of avian influenza have been registered in Lebanon. The degree of cooperation between local authorities and development assistance agencies has been sufficient to secure at least a minimum degree of preparedness.

The country programme, 2007

Summary budget table

(In thousands of United States dollars)

Programme	*Regular resources*	*Other resources*	*Total*
Policy analysis and advocacy for child rights	188	95	283
Childcare and development	59	145	204
Learning	144	440	584
Young people's empowerment and protection	185	490	675
Cross-sectoral costs	40	30	70
Total	**616**	**1 200**	**1 816**

Reasons for extension of the country programme

6. The country programme for 2002-2006 is being extended by one year in because the United Nations Country Team requested a postponement of the Common Country Assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in the light of the political and social upheavals that followed the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on 14 February 2005. A full five-year programme of cooperation for 2008-2012 will be submitted to the Executive Board in 2007, in line with the UNDAF programme cycle.

Goals, key results, strategies, relationship to national priorities and the UNDAF

7. The 2002-2006 programme had four programmes: child care and development; learning; youth empowerment and protection; and promotion of children's and women's rights. The mid-term review, held in 2004, stressed the need to redefine project objectives to make them result-oriented, to avoid an overlap of activities and to better reflect the niche of UNICEF. In the absence of a separate child protection programme, it was recommended that child neglect, violence, abuse and exploitation be incorporated in the existing youth empowerment and protection programme. It was also recommended that young people should be more actively mobilized as agents of social change, and that the youth empowerment and protection programme should cover not only working and out-of-school youth but all young Lebanese.

8. The one-year programme already reflects some of these changes, as well as the new UNICEF medium-term strategic plan for 2006-2010. The programme better matches the country office's limited financial and human resources and addresses the most critical programmatic gaps and the degree of engagement of other UNDAF partners. It also takes into account the absorption capacities of national counterparts and the degree of their actual commitment to long-term action in the country's highly volatile social and political environment. Most UNICEF-supported activities will focus on knowledge generation and advocacy for informed policy-making, with enhanced focus on regional disparities.

Programme components

9. The **Policy analysis and advocacy for children's rights** programme, which is new, aims to achieve the following results: (a) an inventory of national policy analysis capacities, with leading experts mobilized as UNICEF allies and promoters of child-focused development strategies and action plans; (b) improved data supply for policy monitoring and advocacy in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, the national development plans and reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, including through consolidation of national statistical resources in *DevInfo*, managed by the Central Administration for Statistics and publicly accessible via internet; and (c) securing young people's participation in the national policy dialogue through a special television programme run by young journalists housed by Lebanon's major television channel.

10. Capitalizing on the experience of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre and using lessons learned while introducing the *ChildInfo* database, UNICEF will facilitate a United Nations inter-agency exercise to streamline statistical data flows; stimulate exchanges between different databases supported by United Nations agencies and run by various government bodies; and mobilize national policy research capacities. The aim is to establish a highly-positioned "think tank" structure that is able to address complex issues on the national development agenda in a professional, objective and timely manner. Policy concerns voiced by young television journalists should further help influence public debate.

11. The expected results of the **Childcare and development** programme are: (a) the sustainable provision of all public primary health care facilities with essential drugs and vaccines through UNICEF procurement services; (b) strengthening national capacities of the expanded programme on immunization (EPI) by exposing EPI managers to modern cold-chain and vaccine management practices, data collection techniques and modalities of interaction with private service providers; and (c) consolidation of national early childhood development (ECD) resources (human, information, education and communication) in a multi-disciplinary, non-governmental organization (NGO)-based centre, to facilitate access to ECD knowledge and expertise for the public, NGOs and private organizations from inside and outside Lebanon.

12. The **Learning** programme aims to equip the Ministry of Education with a well-documented (measured and evaluated) model of a holistic "essential school package" intervention for further scaling up, to increase retention and prevent drop-outs in public schools, with special attention to female students. UNICEF will capitalize on its experience and comparative advantage as a traditionally effective field actor. The "essential package" school model should assist the Ministry of Education in planning and budgeting interventions in public schools, which should eventually contribute to rebuilding the Ministry's role as a standard-setting and quality-control body. At the same time, UNICEF will pool its technical expertise and advocacy capacity with those of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Bank to push the national education reform process.

13. The intended results of the **Young people's empowerment and protection** programme are: (a) making the situation of the most vulnerable and largely "invisible" groups of children, including institutionalized, abused and exploited children, the focus of the national social protection policy; (b) documenting the technical and financial feasibility of effective models of social rehabilitation and re-integration for young people in conflict with the law, or in other difficult life circumstances, to facilitate further replication of successful services by governmental, non-governmental and private organizations; (c) establishment of an interface for a dialogue between Lebanese young people and the Government, to fill the existing communication gap and add their concerns and rights to the national social, economic and political reform agenda; and (d) identification and promotion of successful models of a comprehensive (information-skills-services) response to HIV/AIDS, especially for vulnerable young populations.

14. The comparative advantage of UNICEF as an international, impartial organization will be used in addressing the controversial and sensitive area of institutionalized and abused children. Supporting community-based models of

rehabilitation services for young offenders, child victims of violence, abuse, armed conflict and other vulnerable categories of children will provide UNICEF with evidence-based arguments to advocate for policy change in the area of child protection. UNICEF will further help to ensure that young people's specific concerns and needs reach the policy-making level, thus overcoming existing confessional, technical and cultural barriers. Protecting young Lebanese from the threat of HIV/AIDS poses special challenges given Lebanon's traditional openness to the world, the influence of the media in imposing role models that often promote life styles that are far from healthy, and the virtual absence of youth-friendly social and health care services that could foster the formation of safe behaviour.

15. Cross-sectoral costs will cover some operational costs, e.g., for telecommunications and some costs related to general logistics.

Major partnerships

16. Relevant government ministries will continue to be key partners, as will the Higher Council for Children, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children, national NGOs and academia. Partnerships with the private sector will be expanded. UNICEF interaction with national stakeholders is expected to be framed by a comprehensive national socio-economic reform plan that will be presented to the international donor community once finalized. Aligning UNICEF interventions with the World Bank's plans is especially important given the Bank's leading role in health, education and social protection reform.

Monitoring, evaluation and programme management

17. The Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will guide monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring tools will include *DevInfo* (implemented by the Central Administration for Statistics) and the UNICEF Programme Manager System. Special data collection and monitoring measures will be included in the design of community-based activities, including provision for baseline data. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs remains the main counterpart and represents the Government of Lebanon in all issues related to the programme of cooperation. The responsibility for programme implementation rests mainly with the Ministries of Public Health, Social Affairs, Education and Higher Education, Labour, Justice, Interior, Youth and Sports. UNICEF will also collaborate with selected NGOs for project implementation. Heads of government units, in collaboration with UNICEF, will have direct responsibility for planning, implementing and monitoring project activities.